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**Police warn boaters to keep it safe on the waterways**

By Amanda Lee, Macomb Daily Staff Writer

June 20, 2002



Macomb Daily photo by David Dalton

**Macomb County Sheriff Mark Hackel displays the "By Land or Sea -- Drive Alcohol Free" campaign beverage can cover at a news conference Wednesday in Harrison Township.**

A multijurisdictional group of law enforcement officers warned boaters of the perils of drinking and then driving watercrafts during a news conference Wednesday.

Macomb County Sheriff Mark Hackel said with the weather starting to warm up and the official start of summer Friday boaters needed to be reminded that safety comes first -- both on the water and on the roads.

"Safety issues are key," he said. "The more intoxicated individuals get, the harder times they have."

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Rules for drinking while piloting a boat are much the same as while driving a car, officials said, and a zero-tolerance policy is in place for both.

"Impaired driving on a boat is .08, just like in a car," said St. Clair County Sheriff's Department Lt. William J. Krul. "You can get a ticket for that. Everyone who is stopped must (undergo) a preliminary breath test just like in a car."

Hackel said one of the main worries his department faces is boaters who think they're all right to drink on the water because they have a pilot, but still get in their cars to drive home once they reach shore.

"We're concerned with what we're going to do when they put themselves behind the wheel," he said.

The news conference was part of the "By Land or Sea Drive Alcohol Free" campaign, which attempts to prevent drunken driving on roads and waterways in southeastern Michigan by promoting public awareness.

"We're attempting to get more attention on the problem right now," said Denise King, a victims advocate with the Macomb County chapter of Mothers Against Drunk Driving.

Statistics compiled by the U.S. Coast Guard found that boat operators with a blood alcohol concentration above .10 are more than 10 times as likely to be killed in a boating accident than boat operators with no blood alcohol concentration.

Hackel said there were no water fatalities in Macomb County last year, but the department has registered one this year on the Clinton River, with a swimmer who drowned. Krul said St. Clair County had a marine fatality Tuesday.

## Water Safety Tips

In addition to warning boaters about the possible fines they could face and costs incurred if their boat has to be towed to shore by a salvage company, police also urged boaters to follow these guidelines.


- Designate an alcohol-free driver.





- Be aware of the adverse effect of the heat/sun on the body while drinking alcohol.
- Limit alcohol consumption.
- Never leave your drink unattended.
- Never accept a beverage that has been opened.
- Have a cell phone available in case of an emergency.

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